



STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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**Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2006**

John L. O'Brien Bldg. - Hearing Room A

PRESENT:

Chair, Bill Schrier, American Legion
Dennis Primoli, At Large
Chuck Karzcewski, PVA

Deryl McCarty, MOAA
Michele Colpaert, DAV
Lloyd Burroughs, NABVETS
Roy Compton, AX-POWS
Bob Harcum, MOPH

Mary Jo Cahill, American Red Cross
Rupert Markham, WSH
Phil Rhumshottel, Marine Corp.
League

Dr. Les Burger, Patriots Pride
First Gentleman, Mike Gregoire
George Edmondson, VVA
Dan Gogerty, VLC
April Harris, Support

ABSENT:

Barry Pfundt, AMVETS

EXCUSED:

Vice Chair, Dick Whipple, VFW
Oria Berndt, Advisor at Large

Welcome and Recognition – Chair, Bill Schrier

Innvocation – Lloyd Burroughs

Pledge of Allegiance

Bill offered condolences on behalf of the committee to Alfie Alvarado, Deputy Director of WDVA for the loss of her father

Bill thanked everyone for their cards, prayers and visits as he recovers from heart surgery.

Bill introduced and welcomed Representative Tom Campbell and introduced the committee members.

Minutes:

A motion was made by Phil Rhumshottel to approve the minutes, as written. Dennis Primoli seconded the motion and it was carried unanimously.

Daucey Brewington was accepted by the committee to represent Native Americans until Frank Cordero can return. Frank has taken a temporary leave of absence for personal reasons.

Emblem Committee Report – Dennis Primoli:

There is \$46,000 in the fund. The committee plans to award \$20,000 to \$21,000 this year. Applications are due the second week of November. The committee will meet and awards will be made the first part of 2007.

Patriots Pride Foundation – Dr. Les Burger:

Dr. Burger is the president of the foundation. Advisors to the board are John Lee and First Gentleman, Mike Gregoire. A handout was provided explaining the board. The foundation is working on the administration and with DVA on programs that will bring the greatest outcomes for the state - specifically, employment and homelessness.

Dr. Burger asked everyone to let folks know about the foundation. The address was included in the handout. Let Les know by e-mail if you would like a board member to speak to your organization. The Governor is behind this.

Veterans Conservation Corps - Mark Fischer:

Mark Fischer works for WDVA and is also a member of Patriots Pride. He is working with veterans who have mental health issues, such as PTSD in getting them into the outdoors working constructively in salmon recovery operations and other areas.

Veterans love to be outdoors. The project is to tap into the outdoor resource and taking their energy to work outside in the habitat restoration field. Senator Jacobsen intro Bill 5339 and over 1100 hours of contributed time.

Veterans are doing this anyway. This is an organized method of tapping into that resource.

The hope to create a stipend fund to provide a day wage for day work in habitat restoration through Patriots Pride Foundation of Washington

These vets may be in danger of becoming homeless and this will provide an income as well as provide mental health therapy. One example is an Iraq veteran who wants to be outside and his mother is hoping he can be a part of this program.

On October 14th and in honor of John Beal, there will be a seven site cleanup of the Duammish Watershed. There will be a Hamm Creek memorial service for Mr. Beal who was a 100% disabled veteran and died recently. He cleaned streams and planted trees.

Mark is looking for ways to set this program up across the state. There are seven veterans across the state currently working on this.. They are recruiting veterans in their areas. Barry Morse has Pierce, King, Thurston and Kitsap counties, with Mark's help.

The Foundation will set up a restricted fund. Mark will bring to the board next week at their monthly meeting.

Bill suggested the CVC take the message out to the counties to hire veterans. Mark also wants to work with DVOPs. King County. has approached him, as well.

Dennis Primoli asked if this could be expanded to all counties. The goal is to work with other organizations to cover the entire state.

Lloyd Burroughs asked about training. Training available one-on-one to make them comfortable. Habitat restoration also provides training.

Good of the Order:

Kathy Nylen and Vince Schmidt presented an award to Bill Schrier they were not able to present at the American Legion National Convention due to Bill's surgery. He was given the award for his work on the bill to protect flag from desecration. Bill thanked Doris Gross for her hard work on this issue.

The public introduced themselves to the committee.

Alfie Alvarado: The VSO Auxiliary and widows' conference will be held Sept. 26 and 27 at Little Creek Casino in Shelton. There are 50 spots available. If an attendee is coming from further than 50 miles, WDVA will host and pay accommodations. Events include: basic training on claims, information on homelessness, outreach and other programs. This is an extension to the current service officer group to do outreach and work with military kids. Kids have special needs because their parents are either deployed, injured or killed. This group includes the Gold Star and Blue Star wives. This is the first event of its kind in the nation. Their outreach work is somewhat unsung. WDVA wants them to know they are appreciated.

Joel Estey: King County Programs include a jail project that was started about ten years ago. Jerry Towne is program manager. There is not a jail project like it anywhere else in the US. They work with the veterans and the courts. Some of

the veterans have been incarcerated many times due to chronic drug and alcohol use. Treatment is a better option for the veteran and the counties (costs and the recidivism rate drop). Fifteen to twenty percent recidivism versus fifty to sixty percent of those who don't go through the program.

Pierce County and Snohomish County are close to starting their own programs. About 25% of their jailed veterans list King County as their residence. The trauma project will expand from nine to approximately five more in King County due to a grant and increased King County funding.

They now have money to help prevent homelessness and National Guard and reserve families have money to stay in their homes. They are hiring to provide additional services at Renton Worksource, including an additional four social workers and office staff to do out reach to outlying areas in King County. This program has received national attention. Substance groups and women's groups will have a staff person who can focus on them. Schools are not aware of the behaviors that might come to the class from kids of deployed parents. They will go out and educate school staff on PTSD in children.

The Service Improvement Plan will address the rest of the money and provide additional and transitional housing – LeaHigh, Compass Center, Plymouth Housing will receive assistance.

Chuck Karcewski asked if the duration veteran can be in the program. Human Services is a separate program with six million dollars. Permanent housing is available for as long as they wish if they follow the rules. The same is true with jobs. Snohomish has a veterans program and Joel believes they are looking at a levy for additional funds.

Lloyd Burroughs stated incarcerated veterans leave institutions at 12:05 a.m., typically. Are you working with the jails so they are discharged at a time the staff can work with them? Yes.

How are veterans in jail identified? Who is working with them? How is the transition made? Jail staff determine eligibility. The program won't take certain offenders. The VA is there and contributes significantly to the success.

Dennis Primoli asked if they are going to have a continuous monitoring program? Veterans are followed up at 30/60/90 day intervals up to one year.

Who is getting the 1.3 million dollars that is left? Some went to Children's and Families commission. What happens in 2012? Hopefully, the levy will be renewed by the voters, otherwise funds will be lost.

Oria Berndt stated Joel's team is doing a wonderful job. Why haven't other counties picked this up? John Lee stated it was argued for years about the

counties' ability to provide veteran relief. The VAAC and VLC united two years ago to get the law changed so counties can do something other than provide handouts. The law change allowed the levy to happen.

King Co. has rehabilitated a building to provide housing to then be able to work with the individual on their other issues.

There are counties thinking "Now what?" Counties are now looking at different ways to provide current services as well as looking at new programs and services.

First Gentleman, Mike Gregoire stated the state is lucky to get Chair back and lucky to have Director Lee. Their work is phenomenal. The best we could ask for.

Mr. Gregoire has had countless meetings and visits to recognize veterans over the past two months, including VSO conventions, Ft. Lewis ROTC and unfortunately, attendance at the funerals of Washington State soldiers killed in action.

Chaplain Jeffries asked for support in developing a care center for veterans at Patriots Landing so families can stay together.

Dick Kirk The Chosin Few facility in the state to offer laterally disabled veterans (with prosthetics) a place to have skiing, etc. to improve their physical disabilities.

Dan Gogerty: September 18th - 9/18 Joint Committee on Military & Veterans Affairs

Sept. 29th – VLC meeting at WDVA

Jan. 12th - VLC reception for legislators 11:00 -12:00

Dennis Primoli: The VA is building new clinic in Walla Walla and will possibly co-locate a fourth state home.

George: copies of the film – Colleen has order forms copies here today for \$20 donation to WWII memorial

County Veterans Coalition Conference is at the Tacoma Dome Hotel on October 25th and 26th.

Premiere screening of "*During the War . . . Women Went To Work*".

Colleen Gilbert introduced and provided history of film.

Karl Schmidt of Bristol Productions was responsible for the development of this film. Some of the women in the film were introduced to the committee and audience: Virginia Little, Helen Turner, Barbara Harrison, and Mary Koman.

Dr. Burger reported there are no longer acute beds for psychiatry or rehabilitation.

Michele Colpaert reported there is a CARES business meeting in Walla Walla on September 25th with the local advisory panel.

Phil Rhumshottel reported DAV Magazine written by national adjutant – bill introduced to D.C. allowing attorneys to be involved with the claims process. His concern is for the cost to the veteran and overtaxing the VA claims process. He asked the Chair to look into it.

Oria thinks there is funding from the VA to pay the attorneys and referenced Bill# S2694.

Next meeting Nov. 16th at the Seattle VA Regional Office.